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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

June 26, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

You will be interested in Tad Szulc's report on his recent conversation with Fidel.

Arthur Schlesinger Jr.

Arthur Schlesinger, jr.

Attachment

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The New York Times

WASHINGTON BUREAU
1701 K STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Prof. Arthur Schlesinger Jr.
The White House
Washington, DC

June 23, 1961

Dear Arthur:

These are the highlights of the conversation with Fidel Castro in Havana ten days ago, relating to a possible dialogue with the U.S.:

1. Castro indicated that he would be interested in the resumption of some form of relationship with us, provided that we agree to quit trying to "destroy" his revolution. The implication is that he wants the U.S. to accept the new status quo in the Caribbean with the maintenance of his Socialist-Creole Communist state. He left it deliberately vague how he visualises such an agreement by the U.S., then volunteered the information that his regime would stand ready to "reciprocate" any evidence of U.S. good will. Specifically, Castro said, this would cover the anti-US propaganda. As a quid pro quo idea, he was asked whether he would quit trying to "export" his revolution. Again, he was vague on this point.

2. He said that a successful negotiation on the rebels-for-tractors affair could lead to further US-Cuban negotiations. He said that once talks are underway on general subjects, Cuba would be prepared to discuss compensation for seized US property.

3. Asked whether he would be interested in meeting the President, Castro replied that he feared saying "yes," lest it be interpreted as a request for a conference. But, he said, "talks can be useful" if there is a desire to reach a settlement. In all the talks with us, he made a point of speaking with utmost respect about the President.

4. Summing up: Castro went out of his way to sow hints about his interest in the resumption of some form of contact with the US. His red-carpet treatment of the U.S. newsmen was part of it. The impression is that he would like to reopen the door a bit, perhaps because of his interest in trade, perhaps because he wants to acquire some political flexibility now that he feels strong and confident. It does NOT follow that the emerging apparatus, in Communist hands, shares Castro's seeming desire to resume a dialogue with the U.S.. The question is whether the return of the U.S. presence to Cuba would contribute to weaken the emerging Communist government apparatus, and make us again competitive in the field of ideas (which Castro himself underlines as being the crucial field in Latin America) and trade, instead of allowing Cuba to remain a Soviet preserve. Conceivably, such presence may allow the circulation of other U.S. ideas and

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All the best,
Tad Szulc

Tad Szulc